



CARE SHEET

Marginated Tortoise *Testudo marginata*

The Marginated Tortoise is the largest European species of tortoise growing to around 14 inch shell length and a weight of around 5kg (11 lb). Endemic to Greece, Italy and the Balkans their natural environment is mountainous and ranges from hot in the summer to cold in the winter. These tortoises will also hide from the heat of the midday sun, being active and feeding mid-morning and mid-afternoon. The landscape is generally barren and bare, almost desert like and native plants have low national value. The measurement is the carapace length (back shell) as measured in a straight line (not curved over the apex of the carapace).

They are a domed carapaced species and young specimens have light brown skin and carapaces with dark brown blotches which darken and become more dominant with age. The adults rear section of the shell flares out and gives them their name.

Housing



Testudo marginata are a terrestrial species of tortoise and have wide range of habitats in the wild, from grassland to dry scrubland. One baby tortoise requires an enclosure 2 feet x 3 feet with walls in excess of 12 inches to prevent climbing and escape. They should be kept alone as they are territorial and solitary by nature. Substrate should be topsoil, not beech chippings or sawdust. A water dish is required to drink from, but never so large and deep as the tortoise can't climb out or could drown.

Adults would benefit from a large outdoor enclosure.

A basking area is required so that the animals can regulate their temperature and UV light absorption. The warm end of the enclosure should be around 35°C the cool end should be around 25°C

A hide, or several, are required around the enclosure to make the tortoise feel secure. Damp moss in at least one of them allows the tortoise to choose its own humidity levels.

This species does hibernate in the wild, but it isn't strictly necessary in captivity. If you want to provide this for them then this should be thoroughly researched first.

Heat and light

UVB and UVA (heat) are both required to maintain correct internal temperatures and synthesis of vitamin D3 and calcium. UVB can be achieved using screw in bulb type UVB lamps or the longer T8 tubes. A UVB of 5% (5.0) – to 10% (10.0) should be provide. Replace UVB bulbs at least every 12 months. A ceramic heat emitter or normal basking bulb can provide UVA and heat. Wattage depends on distance from basking area. The basking area should be 35°C under the heat lamp. Avoid coloured bulbs and use only those closest to the natural spectrum. The lights should be set to a timer to provide 10-12 hours of light per day during natural hours. If the enclosure gets cold at night a ceramic heat emitter or heat mats can keep the temperature above 18°C

Diet

Testudo marginata are a grazing species. In captivity their main part of their diet will consist of greens such as red and green lettuce (not spinach or iceberg) turnip greens, and weeds like dandelion and plantain. Fruit should not be offered. A piece of cuttlebone should be provided at all times for calcium and to keep the beak trim. Protein items such as earthworms and pinkie mice should not be offered.

This guide is meant to be a quick reference/starter guide and does not replace more in-depth research on this species. Always ensure that you know the correct care needs for your animal.

Written by Dudley Pinson ©The Turtle Emporium 2020